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From

Daily Citizen

20 JAN

I give a list of some new books which are
worth reading and which you should include in
your library list: "The Basis of National
Strength," by Charlotte Mason; "Mines and
their Story," by J. Bernard Mannix (Sidgwick
and Jackson); "Harry the Cockney," by
Edwin Pugh (Laurie); "The New Gulliver,"
by Barry Pain (Laurie); "The Burnt House,"
by Christopher Stone (Secker); "The Terri-
ble Choice," by Stephen Foreman (Long);
"Red Harvest," by Newman Flower (Cassell);
"My Russian Year," by R. Reynolds (Mills
and Boon); "Safety in Coal Mines," by D.
Burns (Blackie).

12CMC421

* For

Miss Charlotte Mason

From The General Press Cutting
Association, Ltd.
Lennox House, Norfolk St. London, W.C.
Telegrams: *Bretwalda, Strand, London* Telephone: *Nº 5520, Central*

NEWS FROM ALL
PARTS OF THE
WORLD SUPPLIED
WITH EFFICIENCY
AND SPEED. . .

Cutting from the *Westmorland Gazette*
Address of Publication *Kendal*
Issue dated *25. 1. 13.*

Miss Charlotte Mason, of Ambleside, has prepared for publication and Mr. G. Middleton has issued a brochure containing letters which she contributed to the London "Times" on education. "The Basis of National Strength" is its title; and the author examines the Montessori method not in order to indorse it but to plead for something wider, freer and more humane. She regards that method as one effort among many in the interests of scientific pedagogy; and she concludes by asking if there really is "any such thing."

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16 JAN 1913

EDUCATION.

THE BASIS OF NATIONAL STRENGTH. By CHARLOTTE
MASON. 8½ × 5½, 53 pp. Ambleside : G. Middleton. London :
P.N.E.U. Office, 26, Victoria-street. 6d.

[The six letters here contained, which first appeared in *The Times Educational Supplement* last year, form an eloquent plea for the cultivation of knowledge as the basis of national strength. Miss Mason pleads for a truer interpretation of the word knowledge in the training of the young, and particularly for a fuller realization of the truth that literature is the true foundation of the knowledge of life. Few writers can speak with greater authority than Miss Mason either on the theory or the practice of education ; and a reprint of these valuable papers will be of great service at a moment when educational reform is, with increasing urgency, occupying the public mind. A "supplementary letter" is also included, which appeared in the same journal, criticizing the Montessori method.]

14CMC421

C. Mason

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The Times, No. 1, Printing-house-square, London, E.C.

4 FEB 1913

THE BASIS OF NATIONAL STRENGTH. By Miss CHARLOTTE
MASON. 8½ x 5½, 53 pp. Ambleside: Middleton; London:
P.N.E.U. office. 1s. n.

[This is a reprint of the striking letters which Miss Charlotte Mason recently contributed to *The Times*, seven in all—
“On Knowledge,” “Letters, Knowledge, and Virtue,”
“Knowledge, Reason, and Rebellion,” “New and Old
Conceptions of Knowledge,” “Knowledge in Literary
Form,” and “The Montessori System.” As a veteran
educationist Miss Mason submits, as she explains in a short
preface, to those who have public education at heart these
“arguments in defence of knowledge, which it seems to
me is not duly regarded as the material of education.”
Mind-hunger, to recall Miss Mason’s phrase, is a real thing,
and it is refreshing to see the old, but none too-well-remembered, doctrine that virtue is knowledge so eloquently
expounded.]

Cutting from the *Times* Educational Supplement
 Address of Publication *11, Abchurch Lane, London, E.C. 4*
 Issue dated *6-2-13*

THE MONTESSORI SYSTEM.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Mr. Henry Holman, in his valuable and interesting letter does not, but fails just in the recognition of Dr. Montessori's educational work. Mr. Holman writes as if the application, mutatis mutandis, of Seguin's method of education "leads" to the education of young children in the Alpha and Omega of "Montessoriism." This is a mistake. In the Montessori schools for "infants" the "physiological method" plays a vitally important part. But it is not of the essence of the Montessori system. Or, if it is of its essence, it is not of its quintessence.

What is quintessential in the Montessori system is its author's emphatic affirmation (or reaffirmation) of the master truth that children can neither develop themselves properly nor be "taught" profitably except in an atmosphere of freedom. If this truth, like most master truths, is as old as the hills, or if it has now become a truism, Dr. Montessori has at any rate made it her own by the systematic thoroughness with which she has expounded and interpreted it, and by the freedom logic with which she has accepted and adopted all its practical consequences. In your leading article on "Conference Week" you speak of "the extravagant claims which are being made for a system which puts into practice some of the principles—e.g. the principle of "auto-education"—which form the common heritage of our day." What Dr. Montessori's important claim—and I do not think the claim is "extravagant"—is that her system does put these principles into practice, and that in this respect it stands almost alone. In nearly all our schools and colleges the great transforming principle of "auto-education," which is part of "the common heritage of our day," is a dead letter. In other words, our grasp of it is mainly "notional." Dr. Montessori's grasp of it is "real."

Mr. Holman blames me, as the author of the Board of Education's pamphlet on the Montessori system, for having suggested that "there is something very extraordinary needed in the way of knowledge and skill before a teacher can use the method." I did not express myself so forcibly as Mr. Holman implies. But I did say that for young teachers who wished to work on Montessori lines study, experience, and a firm grasp of the principle of self-education were needed. And to this position I adhere. I leave it to Mr. Holman to decide how much study and how much experience are needed on the part of the teacher who wishes to introduce the "physiological method" into her school. But I say without hesitation that to transform oneself from a class teacher—the ruler and dispenser director of a compact group of children who are all doing the same thing at the same time—into the friend, helper, adviser, and guide of the same number of children, working singly or in small groups, and doing a dozen different things at the same time, is a difficult feat which is not to be done at a moment's notice, and which demands either special gifts or a long apprenticeship on the part of the teacher if it is to be done well. If Mr. Holman had seen the travesty of the Montessori system which I saw in a certain school in Rome he would, I feel sure, have praised rather than blamed me for having advised teachers to study the Montessori system carefully, both in theory and in practice, before they attempted to work by it. "Carry out your position." A student of the Montessori system (even with the "physiological method" as its cardinal feature) would give in the worst type of infant school that could possibly be imagined. As Professor Calkins truly says, "the real danger" to the system "lies in the decline of its too ready acceptance."

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

EDMUND G. A. HOLMES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir, I have not the pleasure of knowing Miss Mason personally, but I look upon her as one who, in an age of growing materialism, has kept before us the spiritual and cultured side of education. I cannot, therefore, at any time, and have her been accused by one of your correspondents of ignorance, unenlightenment, and almost mental deficiency, and by another of professional jealousy. To greet teachers like Miss Mason, who show no trace of professional jealousy is a thing unknown. But perhaps it is a pity that we teachers should object to have "Montessori" perpetually flung at our heads, all labelled and systematized, and advertised by a Society which, with the one exception of Michael Sadler, numbers among its members not one great teacher. Surely we may be allowed our seasons without being accused of professional jealousy by the non-professional? We are told that we might be so easily forgetting the spirit of the movement, that the method is "of course" not new, "of course" not Montessori's own, but that these facts are of merely secondary importance. Yet to the Montessori Society, and to its lecturers, it seems to be all-important that the "methods" should be introduced into England at all costs, and even into schools for cultured English children, though they were originally intended for defective Italian children.

The members of this Society, with the one exception above mentioned, probably do not know that the principles of self-development in freedom, of discipline through self-control, are not unknown in very many of our schools, and that the one-traiting methods have been in use for many years in the schools for the permanent care of the feeble-minded at Southwicks, as which work Mary Dewey, a great Englishwoman, devoted her life without labelling her system.

In the pamphlet issued by the Montessori Society there is not one word of Seguin, nor have I heard him mentioned by the Society's lecturers. From Montessori herself teachers may hardly learn, and get very subject to the perpetually forcing upon them of her methods by people who for the most part are new in education, work and discipline. Another of your correspondents, Mr. Holman, who really does know what he is talking about, wisely points out that in all these circumstances it is the "serving of the water" that is at fault, and with him I heartily agree.

Finally, I would ask if it is really possible for a reasonably observation child to compete with a normal child. My own instincts are to believe that there is no rational basis of comparison between the defective and the normal. A normal baby of two years old can run and dance and sing, can balance himself properly, can speak coherently. Miss Mason is right. The mentally defective child suffers along with the normal, and is not held back, and in speech is in distinct. The most patient and tender cannot make him a normal child. He must always learn slowly and painfully, while the normal child learns quickly and easily. How then can the mentally defective compete successfully in an examination with even the badly taught normal child? And if there be no rational basis of comparison between the two, is it wise to try to adapt to the normal mind the methods found to be successful with feeble-minded Italian children? The "principles" may be right for both, but many teachers cannot help feeling that it is the "methods" that are wrong, which are being forced upon them by the Montessori Society.

I am, Sir, faithfully yours,

THE HOME SCHOOL, Cranford Bridge, Epsom. RUSAN PLATT.

For

Miss L. Mason

16CMC421

From The General Press Cutting
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NEWS FROM ALL
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Cutting from the

Schoolmaster

Address of Publication

Issue dated

25.1.13

MASON VERSUS MONTESSORI.—Our last week's columns gave the greater part of a letter to the *Times* by Miss Charlotte M. Mason, in which she attacked strongly the Montessori method, and especially the undervalued on the importance attached, in the working of that method, to the sense of touch. Miss Mason, indeed, took "occasion by the hand," and hung on the Montessori peg a general adverse criticism of manual training methods. (Our metaphor, here, is quite as mixed as much of Miss Mason's letter.) Now, when one of our most distinguished women educationists, who is also a widely read author, and who is, or has been, the editor of an educational magazine—when she, we say, writes against certain developments in education, most of us will be inclined to give her a careful reading. This we have done, but we are now struggling with a dismal doubt as to whether Miss Mason wrote as carefully as we read. Briefly, she offers little or nothing capable of influencing the opinions of the believers in manual training. The puzzle is to know what stand Miss Mason is really taking. She is no blind worshipper of "the three R's," for she terms it a "fallacy that reading and writing are education," and says, "they truly are mechanical arts"; that is, we take it, not in themselves education, but means towards educating. There is nothing unreasonable in this. The planing and sawing of a boy at his school-handwork is not education, although too many people think it is. It is a means towards the boy's education.

THE SENSE OF TOUCH.—When Miss Mason compares touch and sight, and then pronounces that touch is "the less accurate and active of the two senses," she parts company with nearly every modern authority on education. Our most competent physiologists teach that touch is the parent of all the other senses, and it is quite needless for us to begin with the amoeba, and quote from a mass of evidence to substantiate our statement in this connection. The person *sans* smell loses much; *sans* taste loses more; *sans* hearing enters the kingdom of silence; *sans* sight abides in a pitiless world of darkness; but *sans* touch—is paralysed, is dead. It seems as ridiculous to us as it does to Miss Mason, to blindfold little children, as in the Montessori school. But it is far more ridiculous to put their tiny hands in iron gauntlets, as it were, and to case them in triple steel by forbidding or not allowing them to use that sense which in early years is the greatest inlet to knowledge. Surely Miss Mason must have observed many a little one, ill content with seeing, smear its little hands over some object, and then be called a naughty child for so doing. For doing, forsooth, what Nature demands it shall do! No two senses are so complementary, one to the other, as sight and touch. We desire them to be, not rivals, but co-partners.

HANDICRAFTS AND CHARACTER.—When Miss Mason says, "a child should not do handwork that is not either beautiful or of use," she is on very safe ground, and no handwork teacher would dispute the truism. But when she says, "Handicrafts add to the joy of living, perhaps to the means of living, but they are not educative in the sense that they influence character," even a navy could confute her. Is not even an addition to "the joy of living" bound to influence character? It is the indisputable fact that school handwork *does* influence character, which gives it its supreme *raison d'être*. What a boon to all of us it would be if a public debate could be arranged between Miss Mason and Sir John Cockburn, or Sir James Crichton-Browne, or Sir Philip Magnus, or Mr. Holman, on "Is Manual Training Conducive to the Formation of Character?" Would it were done! In the conclusion of her letter Miss Mason declares "knowledge is the sole lever by which character is elevated, the sole diet upon which mind is sustained." Very well! What knowledge? We cannot believe that Miss Mason is unable to distinguish between knowledge "earthly of the mind" and "wisdom heavenly of the soul"; but, really, it seems to be wisdom that she is contending for, albeit not in the wisest kind of way. In parting, for the present, with Miss Mason, we confess ourselves ranked among her admirers for much she has done and said, and solicitous (or else we had not written as we have) that she apply more closely the powers of her fine mind to the consideration of the educational problems which cluster round the sense of touch.

NEWS FROM ALL
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MISS C. M. MASON ON THE
MONTESSORI METHOD.

IN the Educational Supplement of *The Times* for last month a letter from Miss Charlotte M. Mason was published, in the course of which she wrote:—

[illegible]

Whenever Nene puts his spectacles on

By daylight or candlelight, Eyes should be shut

The reader tries "touching" the hardest objects which offer an outcome, in his own mouth or nostril; for example, and after much patient touching he discovers no resemblance at all unless he is betrayed into one by memory. But possibly if he were to "touch" given objects for so many minutes each time, day after day and month after month, he might at last be able to draw a mouth or month after all. At first the act of touching a thing is to draw a mouth or write an "m," a rather sensuous state is set up; one is not, but it becomes something and something else. The artist is not, but it becomes something and something else. Photographs of both Italian and American artists, when in the act of touching, seem to show that a hypnotic state has been reached.

What is the meaning of this?

Wishing seem to show that a hypnotic state has been induced, we know that hypnotic suggestion is made in some of the Continental schools to further the work of education; and here, curiously, we get the key to the sudden attainment of the art of writing. "We are to read of." But this way danger lies; the too facile child becomes the facile man; whose will power has been weakened, whose brain ex- hausted, until he is little capable of self-direction. The very fact of inducing in eager and active children the habit of continuous "touch- ing" would seem to indicate that undue influence has been exerted, whether through the mere act of touching or through the power of external will.

It is claimed that "the relief of the eye by continuing and developing the sense of touch is a valuable educational asset; but it is well for the blind man to learn to read by touch, and if this "method" is to be carried into schools for older children, and if this "method" is to be strongly emphasized, the child must have small all-metal books for the strong, pure, good with his "touching" children and upon, because his sympathy for the act. We cannot put children and nullifies any his condition, and should we? The eye is strengthened by itself and natural use and enlarged by darkness and inertia.

The Montessori method of

The Montessori method is one effort among many made in the interest of "scientific pedagogy." "I don't believe there's no such a thing," Would Betsy Prig say it? Would she be right if she did? I think so, although every advance we make in the field of Pedagogy. What is the point of this? The point is that the Montessori method is one effort among many made in the interest of "scientific pedagogy."

pedagogy. What we are saying is, practically, "Develop his senses, living; what more do you want?" A child so trained is not on a level with the Red Indian of our childhood; his senses are by no means so acute, and the Red Indian grew up with *many* tales and legends, good and bad.

and legend, an early developed philosophy, even a dance, and Montessori child has no such child, even a religion. I am sure, at the expense of another and other sense, but no fairies play about the painting in of a background, and good angels turn to him, no heroes stir his soul, and person he will become as part of his thought: the child and the world, and some seeing and hearing, the product, the result of much with the indelible, hardly imaginable, what has science to do of him take the life, much form with form, called ideas? No, but song and picture, life, and story are for the educational, with colour; A great dance through the

[illegible]

baseless upon such ideas as are to be found in books, pictures, and
the like, because the more of a person he is the better work will be
of fine character and sound judgment, for these and other reasons I
contemn knowledge in favour of appliances and employments as a
behaviour. Knowledge is the sole lever by which character is elevated
the sole diet upon which mind is sustained.

For *Miss B. Mason* 18-44421
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 Leno House, Norfolk St. London, W.C.
 Telegrams: Leno House, London
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recognized. What the criticism shows is merely that even teachers like Miss Mason have their limitations, and in her case it shows in particular how unsafe it is to put our "faith" in "ideas" as she sometimes does. The term, usually as opposed to things. We may agree with her last sentence that "knowledge is . . . the sole diet upon which mind is sustained," but we must require the kind of knowledge which is based on facts, not the kind which is based on ideas as she often mistakes for knowledge, and of which Miss Mason has given us such remarkable examples in her letter.

I have already taken up so much of your space in dealing with two or three sentences in Miss Mason's letter that even if it were desirable to do so, I could not ask you to print or your readers to spend time on a critical review of much more than that appears to me equally fallacious. But it would not be worth while. Criticism is not dangerous. So far as it is well founded, it is a valuable help to those who are anxious to apply Dr. Montessori's work in these countries. So far as it is ill founded, it will have little or no permanent effect. It may delay the adoption of the method somewhat, but if the method is what many of us think, it cannot be held back by undisciplined criticism. The real danger lies in the direction of its too ready acceptance. The one thing which may postpone for a generation or longer the benefits of the method is its indiscriminate adoption by blind adherents. The very name "the Montessori method" or "system" is incredibly bad; it is not a method, it is not a system, and those who think it is a system or a method, or something that you do when you get the apparatus—they are the friends from whom we must guard to be saved. It is a living principle, and while it may be that the "didactic material" used in Italy may be that which the principle should be used for children in these islands, we must not jump to the conclusion that it will be so. Neither the children nor their environment are the same as in Italy, and I believe we must solve our own problems for ourselves. Material inventions can be adapted from another country, without modification and without thought, but great mental principles cannot be applied without corresponding mental effort.

To those who look no deeper, the Montessori system, even, indeed, seems to be merely a training in what is sometimes called "mechanical" accuracy. This is not Dr. Montessori's view, as I understand it. No doubt she holds that the requirement of accurate and very control over the muscular system is that, over the matter of expression—a condition of the pupil's mental progress. This is what Thuring, of Tuppington, built on when he said that one of the best ways of getting boys to think accurately was to build on careful pronunciation up to even the last syllable of the last word of the sentence. So it is with Dr. Montessori. While she recognizes the importance of well-adjusted action to the actual life work of the adult, she lays much more stress on its importance as a means of spiritual expression and development. One example may be referred to—she postulates the use of writing until it is intellectually desired by the child.

On-undoubted Montessori method and system, which, just because they are regarded as methods and systems, are not Montessori at all—these are so serious a danger that I would never coin so distasteful a word as "Montessorism." If it would succeed in building for ever the words "method" and "system" into the dictionary of the "Montessori."

Yours faithfully,
 EDWARD P. OLIVERWELL.

Trinity College, Dublin.

VIEWS OF THE MONTESSORI SOCIETY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—Will you allow me to correct in a few words as possible the deplorable misrepresentation as to the real nature of Dr. Montessori's teaching to which Miss Mason's letter may give rise in the minds of your readers?

To one not previously acquainted with the work of Dr. Montessori a perusal of Miss Mason's letter would convey very the impression that the Montessori system is nothing but an ingenious method of training the sense of touch, of imparting an early knowledge of the arts of reading and writing, and of cultivating poetry, numbers and personal character. Miss Mason, even, stated as Montessori's aim falls into as profound an error as this. She conceives of a mechanical art, as subjected to undue influence from outside. Such an aim is totally foreign to the spirit of Montessori teaching. Dr. Montessori has fully and fearlessly grasped the great principle of a free atmosphere for the child—grasped it practically as well as theoretically. In this respect she may almost be said to stand alone. Compare a real Montessori school with the best examples of schools conducted on other systems, and you realize at once how different is the atmosphere of the first from that of the others, and how infinitely freer and freer and more stimulating it is.

The fact is Miss Mason has completely misunderstood the system, and then have obscured her vision. Even its warmest supporters are ready to admit that the Montessori system, as it stands at present, has its defects. But they are defects of omission. They are not of the essence of the system, or rather, they are contrary to its essence. For the system, which is at present only half developed, provides for the due cultivation of every expansive instinct. And the method is a free, not a rigid, one. It is capable of adaptation to varying circumstances and environments. The teacher is not bound down to a slavish use of the apparatus; she is free to adapt, to add, to think out fresh channels for the child's activity. Once the principle of freedom for the child is grasped the rest will follow.

One might have expected that Miss Mason would have held out a hand of welcome to an ardent and distinguished worker in the cause of self-education—a cause in which Miss Mason herself has worked with success and distinction for many years. Instead of this, she has written a letter which she believes and even holds up to ridicule Dr. Montessori and her work, expressing herself with such

evident animus as to give the reader the impression that she has allowed herself to be swayed by professional jealousy. Her action argues ill for the success of the cause which she has at heart. In the first instance, when the teacher who believes in self-education has to learn; and how can the rank and file of teachers be expected to learn that lesson when the pioneers of the movement set them an example of jealousy and self-interest? I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
 M. RYTH.

The Montessori Society, 24, Tottenham-square, S.W.

DR. MONTESSORI AND SÉGUIN.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE TIMES.

Sir,—If for nothing else, the educational world is already much indebted to Mrs. Montessori for the great stirring of the waters which her work has aroused. The topic is being everywhere discussed: at teachers' meetings, parents' meetings, education officials' meetings, and meetings of educational amateurs and laymen. Newspapers and magazines are full of it, and there is much cross and conflict of opinion. Pro-bellans are up in arms, defending their idols by attacking the new one; and teachers in infant schools have suddenly discovered that they have long ago discovered all that is new in the new method. For all this, we may well give thanks, for out of it is proceeding a real searching of hearts and testing of principles. No one can intelligently listen to the keen, and often heated, discussions without hearing something valuable.

It is quite true that there is some difficulty for the average educator when he reads in one important educational magazine that "Mrs. Montessori is the latest torch-bearer, and we do not exaggerate in saying that the influence of her first school in Rome seems likely to revolutionize educational ideas all the world over"; while in the very next, and equally important, educational magazine he opens he finds the following:—"What we have anticipated here to show is that the new gospel is, as far as it is true, at least a century old (i.e., as Froebel); that it is partial and incomplete, neglecting or disregarding one side of child-nature. Again, he is invited to attend a discussion on "How England has been solving 'Montessori' problems during the last few years," or a course of lectures on "The Epoch-making Discoveries of the Dottoressa Montessori." But this, too, is all for good, for out of rational conflict cometh conquest—but no hope—for the right.

An amazing, and amusing, point in all this is that Mrs. Montessori's name is being taken in vain in the matter. The method is not her method. It is a method which was wholly formulated, as a method, and mostly developed by a French physician named Edmond Séguin, in his efforts to educate defective children. He published the first complete account of his system in 1846, under the title "Traitement Moral, Hygiène, et Éducation des Idiots." The work was crowned by the Academy, and because the text on the subject in all civilized countries. It has continued to be recognized as one of the most valuable books—with his later work, written in English and published in America, entitled "Idioty: And its Treatment by the Physiological Method"—on the education of defectives, and his method is still known and used in the best institutions for such children. Drs. Shuttleworth and Trospid, and Professor H. Donaldson have borne testimony in its worth in their recent books.

Not only is this so, but Mrs. Montessori herself, quite frankly, fully, and generously acknowledges her indebtedness to Séguin. She tells us in her book that her present work . . . sprang from preceding pedagogical experiments with abnormal children. . . . I became conversant with the special system of education devised for these unhappy little ones by Edmond Séguin. . . . The most of having completed a genuine educational system for defective children was due to Edmond Séguin. . . . He had carefully defined his method of education, calling it the physiological method, work up, up to the ideas, and it may now be said that this great man . . . My ten years of work may, in a sense, be considered as a continuation of the forty years of work done by Séguin and Séguin.

All that she claims for herself is—"My work has not been in any way an application, pure and simple, of the method of Séguin to young children." This is true, and we owe her a great debt of gratitude for having, so to say, re-discovered the physiological method in the light of modern knowledge on physiology, psychology, and anthropology, and by the aid of her own investigations and experiments.

If only the title of the so-called Montessori method would do as Mrs. Montessori did—"Copied out with my own hands the writings of those men [Séguin and Séguin] from beginning to end . . . in order that I might have the time to weigh the sense of each word and to find, in truth, the spirit of the author"—we should all be discussing Séguin and the physiological method. And the sooner this is done the better it will be for education; for Séguin, with his medical training, knowledge, and genius, did what neither Comenius, Pestalozzi, Froebel, or Herbart had done: he showed that the development of mind, in the earliest years, depends upon the development of the muscles, senses, and nerves; and he discovered the means by which this could be best secured. In short, he laid a new and essential light upon the principles and practice of education, which only a master mind can do. Mrs. Montessori will have done equal honour to herself and to the noble and devoted Séguin, and the greatest possible good to education, if her work only serves—and it will do far more than this—to lead to the serious and scientific study of the physiological method.

One further point deserves notice. A writer writes that the method "does not seem to be a system which could hope for much success in the ordinary conditions of the English elementary school, with its large classes and restricted provision" though "it is true that there are

ideas in this book which do admit of importation and can hardly go wrong in the hands of the most ordinary teacher." Unfortunately the Board of Education's pamphlet on "The Montessori System of Education" also says much which suggests that there is something very extraordinary needed in the way of knowledge and skill before a teacher can use the method. One is bound to suppose that the writers have not read Séguin's books and do not know the history of the physiological method; for it is hard to believe that, if they knew both, they could fail to recognize that some years before, for half a century, been doing just what they say, in effect, cannot be done. If only teachers have an intelligent knowledge of children and of educational principles, they will be as successful in applying the physiological method as they will be in applying any other method of the new ideas which are constantly introduced into our schools.

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THE year 1912 will be remembered (for a little time: memories are proverbially short) as the period when a wave of enthusiasm for the Montessori Method overspread England. We have watched this wave with dismay; for the inevitable reaction is bound to follow. Already we see

signs that the unreasoning advocacy of the band of enthusiasts is resulting in a tendency to sweep the whole matter aside as unworthy of real investigation. In our leading article last month we wrote in cordial agreement with the main principle of Dr. Montessori's teaching. In the words of Mr. Edmond Holmes, "the master principle of the Montessori method is that of self-education." This is a principle adopted to a large extent in good Kindergartens and in some secondary schools; but we need to be reminded that the function of education is to help growth, to give it free play, and to stimulate it to provide suitable channels for itself, and that discipline through liberty is the ideal. We must not be misled by the methods with which Mme Montessori seeks to carry out her principle into a belief that, because we think we can find better methods, therefore we were in no danger of losing sight of the principle.

We have much sympathy with Miss Charlotte Mason's letter to the *Times*, pointing out that Mme Montessori encourages the training of the senses only and entirely omits education in ideas. All that Miss Mason says is justified in a sense; but we are inclined to think that she is attacking certain manifestations of the method rather than its underlying principles. It is true that in Mme Montessori's book we see little attempt to supply ideas outside the experience of daily life. Stories are not told. The Baby House is a little world occupied with itself alone. The senses are sharpened by practice until the children can do little wonders; but still they would not compare with a Red Indian or a trained acrobat, as Miss Mason points out. We must remember the type of child with which Mme Montessori is dealing and the age of that child. These were children living in tenements in the least desirable quarters of Rome and from three to seven years of age. Miss Mason has devoted herself to the study of schemes of education suitable for children of well-to-do parents who have left the nursery behind.

AMIDST this variety of opinion some of us would like an authoritative statement on the value of the Montessori method. It saves trouble when we are told exactly what to think. But not even the Child Study Society would, we expect, venture to lay down the law. Certainly the Board of Education will not do so. Mr. King asked the President of the Board of Education whether inquiries are being made into the methods and results of the Montessori system and its applicability in this country; and, if so, how it is proposed to introduce a system under which children are admitted at two years, whereas most Local Authorities exclude them till five years of age; and 15 superficial feet are required, whereas our standard of 9 superficial feet has not been attained in many schools. This is Mr. Pease's reply: "The Board published on November 1, as an educational pamphlet, a report upon the Montessori system made by Mr. E. G. A. Holmes.

In publishing the report, the Board were careful to state that they did not necessarily endorse the opinions expressed in it. They have not suggested the introduction of the system into public elementary schools."